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# Informational Interviews Researching Careers:

Essential elements to consider before, during and after

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## PURPOSE

After exploring various career fields online and identifying areas of interest, *what next?* Talking to people who currently work in a field of interest is an excellent way to learn more as well as seek advice and create a network.

An **informational interview** gives you a chance to speak with a professional to **gain further information** about related careers of interest and the best ways to break in.

When trying to decide what career path you wish to take, or you hit a brick wall in your search and are looking for new angles, informational interviews are extremely valuable. **Do not use them to ask for a job or internship.**

## ARRANGING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Send a formal email request to the person with whom you want to speak. If contacting an alum, send a message through *Haverford Connect*, our professional networking platform. [connect.haverford.edu](http://connect.haverford.edu)

Explain why you want to meet with them and to find out if a meeting is possible. Be clear that you are seeking “career information and advice,” not help finding an internship or job. Ask friends, professors, family members, past employers, and alumni for leads concerning individuals that may provide valuable information relating to your interests. Try to meet in the workplace. You can learn more by being in the work environment. A virtual meeting is also helpful.

• **Within 24 hours of the meeting, write a thank you note/email** describing what was of value to you. Write periodic follow up emails to keep them informed of your progress sharing your continued appreciation!

## EMAIL ETIQUETTE

- Use appropriate punctuation and do not use emojis.
- Respond to all emails about the meeting within 24 hours
- Provide multiple windows in which you are available for a call, rather than only one time.

## APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS FOR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

1. How were you first interested in and, eventually, did you enter this field?
2. Briefly, what was your career path from college to your current position?
3. What do you do in a typical day? (for someone early in their career)
4. What do you find most rewarding about your work? Least rewarding?
5. What qualities, skills and experience are sought for entry into this field? ... necessary for success in this field? Future skills?
6. What classes, projects or other activities can I do to prepare myself for this career field?
7. What other fields or related areas of specialization have you (or should I) considered? (Get referrals if appropriate)
8. What are some related positions/organizations a person interested in this field should explore?
9. To your knowledge, are internships and/or BA/BS entry level positions common in this field? If so, do you know of specific organizations you would recommend I reach out to?
10. What are some current issues and trends impacting this field and how?
11. What, in your opinion, is the job outlook in this career field? ...What will affect its growth or decline?
12. To what degree, and how, are advances in technology impacting this field?
13. What advice can you offer me as I prepare and seek to enter this field?
14. How has the pandemic affected your work and the work of your organization? Are there permanent changes?
15. Can you recommend others with whom I might speak to learn more about this or a related field? May I use your name in contacting this person?

## TIPS

- Do your homework before reaching out. Know enough about the field to articulate why you are interested in potentially pursuing a related career. Look at their LinkedIn profile and other bios.
- Dress in a professional manner.
- Keep the meeting brief and to the point.
- Before you begin the informational interview, inform your host of the questions you want to cover so they can gauge their answers to the time available.
- Do not ask general questions about information that you can easily find online or in printed literature. This is wasting the person’s time. Try to ask pointed, specific questions that demonstrate that you have learned about the person and their particular career experiences
- Always maintain eye contact, smile, and nod occasionally
- Take notes if you wish, but do not write everything; rather note key phrases to remind you of the answer.
- Feel free to answer questions about yourself if you are asked, or to intersperse some information about yourself throughout the meeting.
- Do not forget to ask for names of other contacts. This should always be the last question you ask; in this manner you will be able to expand your network.
- Have a supply of your resume with you. If requested, you can offer it to help your contact to frame their advice.